

First line advice:  
For Patients with Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

This information sheet has been provided to give you basic initial information about what to do if you have Hypertension (High Blood Pressure). If you need more detailed advice and support, please ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian.

Reducing your blood pressure can help lower the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. Eating a balanced diet, cutting down on salt, taking regular exercise and aiming for a healthy body weight helps reduce blood pressure.

<p><b>Cut down your salt intake – as you do this your taste will gradually adjust, and you should find that you prefer less salty food</b></p> <p><b>Aim for less than 6g of salt each day.</b></p>	<p>Avoid sprinkling salt on your meals and reduce salt added in cooking. Choose fresh foods where possible as processed foods usually have a high salt content. Soups, crisps, savoury snacks, soya sauce, Marmite, gravy granules and stock cubes are all high in salt. Experiment with flavouring foods using herbs and spices, vinegars or lemon juice instead of salt and stock cubes. Read food labels to select lower salt varieties:</p> <p><b>HIGH salt    1.5g or more per 100g</b> <b>LOW salt     0.3g or less per 100g</b></p>
<p><b>Aim for at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day</b></p>	<p>Fruit and vegetables are rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals. Include at every meal and snack. Fresh, cooked, tinned, dried, juiced fruits and vegetables all count.</p>
<p><b>If you drink alcohol, keep to sensible limits</b></p>	<p>Men and women should limit their intake to 2-3 units a day, with 2 alcohol free days per week. 1 unit of alcohol is a half-pint of beer, a small glass (125mls) of wine, or single pub measure of spirits.</p>
<p><b>Aim for a healthy weight</b></p>	<p>If you are overweight, a steady rate of weight loss can reduce blood pressure. Following the advice below will begin the change to a healthier diet.</p>
<p><b>Eat regular meals: aim for 3 meals, based on starchy foods, evenly distributed over the day</b></p>	<p>Starchy foods include bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, chapatti, and cereals.</p> <p>Choose high fibre varieties of these foods where possible such as wholegrain bread and breakfast cereals. Reduce portion sizes if you are trying to lose weight.</p>

<p><b>Eat less fat especially saturated fat</b></p>	<p>Grill, boil, poach, steam or oven bake your food rather than frying.</p> <p>Replace saturated fats (butter, lard, ghee) with unsaturated fat spreads and oils but remember to limit these to aid weight loss.</p> <p>Choose leaner cuts of meat and meat products, and try having fish twice a week, one of which should be oily.</p> <p>Snacks such as sponge cakes, cream cakes, biscuits, chocolate, Bombay mix, fried crisps etc are also high in fat so should not be eaten regularly.</p>
<p><b>Include 3 servings of low fat milk and dairy products a day</b></p>	<p>One serving is 1/3 pint of milk, 125g of yoghurt, 2oz cheese.</p> <p>Use semi-skimmed or skimmed milk or soya milk fortified with calcium. Choose reduced fat cheese and diet yoghurts.</p>
<p><b>Eat fewer sugary foods and drinks</b></p>	<p>Cut down on sweet biscuits, cakes, sweets, and chocolate. Drink water, unsweetened juice, diet fizzy drinks or sugar-free squashes. Try drinking tea and coffee without sugar, or use an artificial sweetener instead.</p>
<p><b>Be as physically active as you can</b></p>	<p>30 minutes per day at least five times per week is recommended however check with your doctor first to see what is appropriate for you.</p>

This information leaflet was produced by the Community Dietitians at The London North West Healthcare NHS Trust, Northwick Park Hospital, Watford Rd, Harrow, HA1 3UJ

This information sheet was produced by the Community Dietitians and is intended to be given by a health professional only. It is not a substitute for proper medical diagnosis or dietary advice given by a Registered Dietitian. The advice is not appropriate for certain medical conditions such as diets that require the exclusion or restriction of particular foods. If in doubt, please check with your medical practitioner.  
 Last review January 2017  
 Review date January 2019

Reference: HT2017